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ABSTRACT

A study examined how a teacher accommodated diversity in a fifth-grade classroom in an inner-city school during a 2-year project involving literature-based reading instruction with small student-led response groups called Book Clubs. The Book Club project operated in the classroom using the four components of literacy instruction--reading, writing, discussion, and instruction. The teacher took field notes three or four times per week and kept a personal journal. Some groups were audio-taped and video-taped, and university-based researchers took field notes on a regular basis to provide data about group activity. Four issues that arose during the 2-year study were: (1) grouping students heterogeneously so that they could function cooperatively to discuss literature; (2) choosing appropriate literature, in terms of reading level, interest level, and availability; (3) giving students a voice in this process as the teacher struggled to help students take ownership of the learning process; and (4) working around the constraints of teaching in a public school system. Findings suggest that accommodating the diversity in the students by dealing with these issues as they arose brought successful literacy experiences to many of the students during their year in Book Club. (Three figures representing Book Club components, offering students suggestions on what to put in their reading log, and a sample log page, and a table listing class-generated reading log choices are included; 21 references are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Accommodating diversity in the elementary classroom: A look at literature-based instruction in an inner city school

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Abstract

This paper looks at how I accommodated diversity in my fifth grade classroom in an inner-city school, during a two-year project involving literature-based reading instruction with student-led book clubs. Using the four components of literacy instruction: reading, writing, discussion, and instruction, I explain how the Book Club Project operated in my classroom. I discuss four issues that arose during the two years of the study: (1) grouping students into heterogeneous groups which could function cooperatively to discuss literature; (2) choosing appropriate literature, in terms of reading level, interest level, and availability; (3) giving the students a voice in this process as I struggled to help students take ownership of the learning process; and (4) working around the constraints of teaching in a public school system. Accommodating the diversity in my students by dealing with these issues as they arose, brought successful literacy experiences to many of my students during their year in Book Club.

Accommodating diversity in the elementary classroom: A look at literature-based instruction in an inner city school

In late October, during our reading program, I heard the following conversation among five students in my fifth grade classroom.

Jean: Who do you think, who do you think, threw the hailstones?

Jason: The cloudmen.

Mei: Uh, the cloud.

Andy: (Showing the book to Jason). See right here.

Stark: God.

Mei: This is a fantasy.

Jean: No, I mean in real life, in real life, in real life.

Jason: Mother Nature.

Jean: God.

Jason: Mother Nature.

Jean: God.

Stark: Mother Nature makes the clouds.

Mei: Uh huh.

Stark: Mother Nature rules God out.

Andy: No, he doesn't.

Mei: Uh huh, uh huh.

The conversation continued for approximately ten more minutes as these students argued the issue of God vs. Mother Nature. The discussion was prompted by a chapter in the book they had just finished reading James and the Giant Peach (Dahl, 1961). The students in this group, two girls and three boys of a variety of ethnic backgrounds and abilities, are representative of the diverse students in my classroom. Despite their diversity these children worked together in a student led response group, maintaining conversation for 10 - 20 minutes each day. In this paper I describe what had been happening in my classroom to lead the children to this point. Specifically,

I discuss the multiple needs of my diverse students and the issues these needs created.

I teach at Allen Street School in Lansing, Michigan. There are 33 elementary schools in the Lansing School District. Our school has about 400 students in grades K-5. The children who attend the school are mostly neighborhood children who walk to school. Eighty-nine percent receive federal assistance through the hot lunch program. Due to the transient population in our school's neighborhood, we average a 65% turnover in student population each year. My students come from different ethnic backgrounds, including African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Caucasian.

For the past two years, I have kept a reflective journal of my teaching, especially literacy instruction, of my fifth grade students. My entries form the data base for this study. Previous studies drawn from my classroom (McMahon, 1992) show that, overall, my students benefit from increased opportunities to interact around texts. They showed growth in their abilities to: (a) write reflectively about text, (b) discuss a book or story in small groups of students, (c) talk about themes and topics over several books, and (d) participate in whole class discussions about literature. However, McMahon also found that as the teacher, I played an important role in providing students with instructional support in reading, writing and discussion skills, and in monitoring students' activity to help modify instruction and support.

While I was in my 9th and 10th years of teaching during the two years of this study, these were my first two years of teaching fifth grade. During this time, I also worked on my masters degree and maintained my interest in literacy education. When I finished my graduate studies, I became part of a collaborative team which was exploring literature-based reading instruction that emphasized student-led response groups. This program came to be known as "Book Club" (McMahon, 1992; Raphael, McMahon, Goatley, Bentley, Boyd, Pardo, & Woodman, 1992). As a teacher researcher on this project, I found the weekly meetings and the dialogue with my colleagues to be very beneficial. As problems arose in my classroom, this group was able to discuss and offer solutions from many areas of expertise. Four of those problems -- grouping

students, literature selection, student voice, and public school constraints -- are the issues which I address in this paper.

Book Club is my reading program, with four components -- Instruction, Reading, Writing, and whole class Community Share -- that support the student-led discussion groups, or Book Clubs, from which the program takes its name (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Book Club is unique in that children read, write, and participate in Community Share in order to prepare for their small group discussions, called Book Clubs. Instruction is the foundation of the program, and supports the other components of the program. The four activities that children participate in -- reading, writing, community share, and Book Clubs -- are seen as reciprocal. Each can offer support to the others, and each can influence the way children participate in future experiences.

Reading. Reading is an important Book Club component. The children usually read novels, though I included picture books and non-fiction at times. While the children generally read silently, I interspersed other reading activities such as reading with a partner and my reading aloud, depending on the difficulty of the text. The students read roughly a chapter (5-10 pages) per day. The reading level of the books used was between 4.5 and 5.5.

Writing/Representation. A second Book Club component is writing or representation. The children wrote in reading logs after reading the chapter(s) each day. The children were assigned something to focus on for their writing, such as the strategy that had been taught earlier in the lesson, or a specific comprehension question. Sometimes the responses involved higher level thinking such as asking students to place themselves in a character's situation and to explain how that character might have felt or reacted. At other times the log was a place for the children to reflect upon their own feelings and opinions, as they tried to understand the story through their own personal experiences. The reading log response did not always take the form of text, it also

included representation. For example, sometimes the children drew pictures while other times they made concept maps. When they finished the assigned focus each day, they were free to do another entry on a topic of their own choosing. The students kept a handout developed by the team (Raphael et al., 1992b) in their Book Club folder to remind them of possible choices (see Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 about here

During the second year I used Book Club, children in the class began adding their own ideas for reading log activities and we created a chart that we kept on the classroom wall for all students to use (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

The purpose of writing in the logs was to give students a chance to prepare for the small group discussion to follow. It helped the children organize their thoughts and feelings about what they might want to talk about in their groups. At the end of books or units, the reading logs were used as a place for children to synthesize, analyze or evaluate what they had read and learned.

Instruction. The instruction that supports students' reading, writing, and talk has evolved over the course of the two years. It began as strategy and skill instruction, where I modeled such strategies as sequencing, predicting, reviewing, summarizing, character maps, etc. I modeled a particular strategy, and expected my students to practice the strategy in their reading log later during that lesson. The reading log was then brought to the small group discussion and served as the preparation for the discussion. This kind of instruction was focusing on "what to share" in book club groups.

When the research team reviewed our field notes and transcriptions of students' small group conversations, we found the need to teach discussion skills, such as listening, asking questions, and taking turns. During this kind of instruction, I asked students to evaluate their own small

group, they viewed video tapes, and they read and acted out segments of transcripts of other book club groups. The children tried to evaluate what had been done well, and what they could improve. This instruction focused on "how to share" in book club groups.

During the second year I continued with elements of instruction that seemed effective in the first year of the program: modeling of skills and strategies, reviewing and summarizing text, and evaluating small groups. In addition, I initiated a focus on comprehension after the evaluation of the previous years' standardized test scores. I began putting more focus on understanding the information in the text, through teaching a variety of skills such as drawing conclusions, making inferences, selecting detail, and vocabulary development. I taught specific strategies such as QAR, Question Answer Relationships (Raphael, 1986) to help children think about using information both in the text and in their heads. I also extended my instruction to address aesthetic response, something I had only touched on briefly during the first year. The class and I began to focus on personal feelings about the story, as students began to formulate very strong opinions around themes which evolved from the stories. I wanted the children to be able to use the text to support and explain these opinions.

Community Share. The Book Club program includes whole class discussion or "Community Share", where the entire class shares ideas from the story or from their own lives, ideas prompted by the story. I became the facilitator during Community Share, without a prepared agenda so I could follow my students' lead. Often the things discussed during the Community Share would be heard again in subsequent Book Club groups or seen in the children's writing.

Book Clubs. The second aspect of discussion makes the Book Club program unique. Book Club groups are small student-led response groups. The groups consisted of 4-6 heterogeneously mixed students who met each day to discuss the story, using their reading log entries as a basis for discussion. I stressed that this was the most important aspect of the program, and that all other activities were building to these discussion groups. A lot of value was placed on the things the children discussed in their Book Clubs, and instruction often focused on how to make the Book

Clubs better.

Observations

While students were in their response groups, I observed the class overall, taking field notes three or four days each week. I maintained a personal journal throughout the year to record observations, feelings, frustrations, and successes of the students. Further, some groups were audio-taped, video-taped, and university-based researchers took field notes on a regular basis, to provide data about group activity.

What Did I Learn?

Several relevant issues surfaced during the two years of this study. The first major issue I faced dealt with grouping the students. Our school had historically used ability grouping, and only in the last several years had considered whole class grouping for reading instruction and heterogeneously grouped students for whole language activities. The second problem that arose was that of literature selection. Finding books that are interesting to the students, at the appropriate reading level, and having multiple copies available when needed compounded the problem of literature selection. The third issue concerned student voice in the classroom. I have found that students will enjoy something more and try harder if they have choices in their own learning. Finding a good way to incorporate this idea into Book Club proved an interesting one. Finally, the last issue revolved around the constraints placed upon a public school teacher who is going against the mainstream to teach literacy. I had to provide explanations for parents, administrators and colleagues, and supply evidence of students' results as proof that I was really teaching reading.

Grouping the students. Research suggests that heterogeneous groups lead to higher achievement for all students (Dishon & O'Leary, 1984) and my own experiences teaching diverse learners confirmed this (Pardo & Raphael, 1991). As a research team, we made a commitment to heterogeneous grouping early in the first year of the study. However, interpreting what that meant was much more difficult. Reading level, writing level, oral ability, gender, ethnicity, and students' attitudes all played a role in developing truly heterogeneous groups, and I continually had to ask

myself which of these areas were critical to defining "heterogeneity." As the groups changed throughout the year, based on the current unit or theme being studied, I revisited the issue of grouping several times. Descriptions of three students, Leroy, Crystal, and Latrice, illustrate the complexity of issues of heterogeneity, typically defined only in terms of ability or ethnicity.

Leroy, an African-American boy with average to high abilities in all literacy areas, began Book Club with a fairly positive attitude. As the year progressed however, Leroy became more and more turned off, participating as little as possible. This attitude was seen throughout the school day in all subject areas. During Book Club I observed he didn't read the book regularly, his reading log contained very little information, and his participation in whole class and small groups activities dwindled. As a result, Leroy's attitude, not just his ability level, became a very important factor when determining in which group he should be placed. Since he was also seen as a leader to a small group of boys in the classroom, if they were in the same group together, he could very easily divert their attention to his way of thinking. Putting him with a group of students who loved Book Club and who encouraged him to participate was the best grouping arrangement for Leroy.

At the other extreme was Crystal, an above-average Caucasian girl who seemed to try hard to please her teachers. Since Crystal had participated in Book Club in fourth grade, she began her second year wanting to be the leader/teacher in her small groups. She even trained her first group of the year to raise their hands to her questioning. Since this is not a goal of the student response groups, I thought Crystal should be placed in a group with other students who showed leadership abilities. Students who wanted to make sure others' voices were heard, such as Mei (Raphael & Brock, 1992), or who wanted the floor, such as Stark (Goatley, 1992), worked well to balance Crystal's teacher role. Again, factors in addition to ability, helped to accurately define the heterogeneous mix of students.

Latrice, an African-American girl of mixed literacy abilities, presented a third situation. Latrice had a very aggressive personality, viewed by many of the teachers in the school as bullying the other children. None of her peers wanted to be in a group with her since they were afraid of

her temper. In fact, several students specifically had asked not to be in Book Club with her. I tried several different grouping arrangements with Latrice. I first placed here in the same group as Crystal, in hopes that Crystal would not be intimidated and instead would get Latrice actively involved. The result was that Crystal and Latrice dominated the group, silencing the other members. I then tried Latrice in a group with "tough" boys, but the students in this arrangement spent most of their time arguing about things like who would go first and spent very little time discussing the story. At one point, I even removed Latrice from all Book Clubs and instead asked her to observe, recording field notes of her previous group. My hope was that she would see how the children cooperated in the classroom and were able to leave behind the differences that had occurred on the playground. Finally, I placed Latrice in a group of all girls. The other girls were not necessarily her friends, but ones who would tolerate her. She quickly became the leader in this group, and many days they had good conversations about the story. Yet, there were still several days when they argued or talked about makeup and boys. Creating a Book Club to benefit Latrice, yet not disadvantage other students has proved to be one of my most difficult challenges.

There were other kinds of grouping problems that I would like to mention briefly. I encountered students who did not want to be in a group and would physically separate themselves; students who would sit quietly during most of the conversation adding only one or two words during the conversation; students who would divert their attention, such as get up to sharpen pencils; students who seemed to think the group was finished, get up, and return to their seats while the group continued talking for another 5-10 minutes; and students who monopolized the conversation. I had to consider all children individually, noting their diversity and uniqueness each time I determined groups. This was probably the most frustrating issue I faced during the two years. However, the right combination of students led to thoughtful, interesting, even intriguing, Book Clubs; this made all the efforts worth while.

Literature Selection. Having such a diverse group of students added to the difficult decision of literature selection. I was faced with two separate aspects of this problem. First, the

books and units selected needed to reach a majority of the children's interests and reading abilities; in my class this included readers as low as 1.5 and those as high as 8.0. Second, a range of ways to select literature exists, and I needed to decide which method was best for my students and me. At one end of this range is each child individually selecting their own book (eg. Hansen, 1987, Swift, 1993). Other options include the teacher selecting the books for the children, the children selecting a title from a list provided by the teacher, and having whole class sets of books so that all children read the same book at the same time (Routman, 1988).

I made several decisions surrounding these options. First, I identified my own goals for literature selection: (1) books needed to have themes that were worthy of discussion, (2) they needed to be available, (3) they needed to fit district constraints of grade level recommendations, and (4) they needed to be of interest to the students. Second, I decided to try three of the approaches described above for selecting literature as I tried to find the best method for reaching my goals. In this section I discuss the three literature selection approaches I tried: (1) a collaborative decision by the Book Club research team, (2) student selection from a constrained set of books within a single genre, and (3) student selection of a genre, without choice of specific titles.

The first unit of the first year was on World War II, selected by the collaborative Book Club research team. This topic was chosen because we felt it could be understood by these students, "war" was a popular topic with upper elementary students and the unit had been successful in a Book Club pilot study with children of the same age and cultural diversity. We were able to obtain multiple copies of the book Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes (Coerr, 1977) and we used it to begin the unit. Several picture books about World War II were also used, and the unit concluded with Number the Stars (Lowry, 1990). The advantages to this method of literature selection included: (1) being able to have the books available when needed, and (2) being able to plan out the unit ahead of time, incorporating the themes into other content areas. The only disadvantage was that while the topic of war did prove interesting, many of the students did not

enjoy the last book, Number the Stars. The complexities involved surrounding this book are discussed by McMahon (1992) as she studied five students during the time they used this book for Book Club.

The second method of literature selection, student selection from a constrained title list within a specific genre, came about when I gave the students a survey, asking them if they wanted to do another war story. They decided it was time to move on to another theme or genre. I then decided to do a biography unit, and gave students a choice of who they wanted to read about, using a list I had generated based on potential interest and availability from the district's language arts center. When it came time to order the three books the children had selected, two of them were not available, and I had to select two other less popular biographies. Small groups were then formed around the biography being read. The advantage to this method of literature selection was that some students appreciated self-selecting their books and therefore they wrote and discussed more within their small groups. The disadvantages were: (1) the unit was awkward for me, because the three books read did not have enough in common to lead to meaningful discussion in Community Share; (2) they did not share enough features to allow reasonable instructional emphasis; and (3) availability, since one of the biographies was chosen by very few children, yet a group of students had to be placed in that book anyway due to limited numbers of copies of the more popular book. This group of students resented others having choice, when their own choices could not be honored. While we were lucky to have multiple copies of trade books available through the language arts center, we could not always control the timing of the books' availability.

After the biography unit, I used a third method of literature selection. I gave a questionnaire to the students to see what other interests they had. Students chose to do a unit on fantasy, partly based on their wide enjoyment of James and the Giant Peach which I had read aloud earlier in the year. The books Tuck Everlasting (Babbitt, 1975), and A Wrinkle in Time (L'Engle, 1962) were then selected by the research team. The advantages of having students choose the unit were: (1) the unit was very successful with the students partly because they felt they had selected it, (2) most

students enjoyed the individual books, and (3) it allowed me some leeway to select fantasy titles that were available and readable. I did not find any disadvantages to this method of literature selection.

During the second year, I made the literature selections to meet the diverse needs of the students, based on end of the year surveys by the children in the first year, and my own feelings and observations from using the three methods of literature selection. Because of the success of the previous year, I began the second year with the fantasy unit, using Tuck Everlasting and James and the Giant Peach. The second unit focused on survival, using Island of the Blue Dolphins (O'Dell, 1960), and Hatchet (Paulsen, 1987). The final unit was an author study in realistic fiction, using Katherine Paterson's books, Bridge to Terabithia (1977) and Park's Quest (1990). During each of these units the second year, all my students were reading the same book at the same time.

I would like to briefly discuss the issues that were critical to my decision to use one book with the entire class the second year, rather than allow children more choice in title selection. First, the titles offered must be available when needed, and I felt that I could not rely solely upon our language arts center. Second, consideration needs to be placed on the issue of what happens if only one or two children select a certain book. Could a group consist of only two children? Would the students have their first choice in this case? Third, how will the students be grouped? If groups are formed solely on the title selected, some groups may be far larger than others. Also, when children are allowed choice they often tend to choose the same book as their friends. Grouping arrangements might not function well with groups of friends. I had found that groups worked best when they had between four and six members, they were heterogenous, and grouping students based on their individual book selection did not agree with these findings. And finally, the genre and purpose for the book or unit should be considered. I had wanted the children to learn about the people in the biographies, to see how biographies were written, and to write a biography of their own. This became a very difficult task, as the books selected did not share a

common style, and the three subjects of the books were vastly different. If a different genre or purpose would have identified, the unit might have been more successful. If each group is reading a different book, the books should be thought of as a set, with commonalities noted before beginning the unit to ensure the goal is obtainable.

In addition to the issue of student choice during Book Club, it should be noted that I encourage student choice of literature at other times. The children have DEAR, a silent-sustained reading program daily, they check out library books weekly, and they read to a first grade buddy twice a month. In each of these cases, the children are selecting the literature they read. By including these choices throughout the school day, I was able to maintain a successful Book Club program, as well as honor student choice about the books they read.

Using the three methods of literature selection described above, especially during the first year, helped me to evaluate literature selection in terms of my goals as stated earlier. In looking for books that were; (1) worth talking about, (2) available, (3) included in the district's grade level recommendations, and (4) interesting to students, I decided to use one book with my all my students the second year.

Student Voice. As I explained above, during the first year the students had limited opportunities to offer input on literature selection. During the second year, because the students did not choose their specific literature selections, they had more voice in the kinds of literacy activities in which they wanted to engage. The format for writing in the logs evolved over the course of the two years, and by February of the second year, the children were using flexible concept map/outlines in their logs, centered around student choice (Short, 1991). We called them "Share Sheets" and the children chose 3 or 4 things to write about for sharing in Book Club and Community Share. They arranged their ideas around a center circle, which contained the Chapter number and date (see Figure 3).

Insert Figure 3 about here

Late in February, the class and I developed a list of possible spokes for their share sheets (see Table 2). I left this posted on the wall in the classroom for the remainder of the year. As we finished Hatchet and moved into Bridge to Terabithia, this chart began to take on a life of its own, fueled by the students' own ideas. They began to add new ideas to our list of things to write in their reading logs. When students identified a new activity, they explained it to the class and their classmates would then try it out in their own logs. I tried to keep track of these new activities by adding the idea and the date it was suggested to the chart paper. For example, Jason introduced and explain the concept of "Titles" on April 6 during the reading of Bridge to Terabithia, explaining that Katherine Paterson seemed to name her chapters on purpose, and he gave several examples. He also noted that you can't always tell before reading what the chapter will be about, but that you have to read the chapter first to see what the title meant. We can see in Figure 3 that on April 8 Crystal uses "title" as one of her spoke choices to explain the chapter entitled "The Golden Room". In this way, the children began to feel ownership of the process.

A second opportunity for student voice was in their choice of where to hold their Book Club group. Part of my goal was to have students engaged in discussions mature readers have. I had belonged to an adult book club group for several years. We met each month in someone's home to discuss a common novel. At these meetings we discussed such things as how we felt about the book, what we liked, how we would change the book, what the book had taught us, and sometimes even who we imagined playing the main character's role if the book were made into a movie. This was such a contrast to what I saw children in school talking about when they read stories and books during reading. It became important to me to have children discuss books in the manner with the freedom I had experienced, because I enjoyed talking about books this way, and felt children could too, if they were given the right books and the opportunity to do so. With this in mind, I began to give students a voice in where they would conduct Book Clubs. Hallways, stairwells, the library, book rooms, and the reading rug were some of the places the students

selected. I felt that meeting in various places to discuss the story seemed to help students have more authentic conversations about books.

Constraints of Public Education. A fourth major issue I faced can be attributed to the constraints of public education and a district which had recently purchased a new basal series with hopes that teachers would use it. I encountered frustrations in several areas: (1) adhering to curriculum objectives, (2) concerns of other teachers, (3) substitute and student teachers in my classroom, (4) scheduling conflicts, and (5) availability of books. The principal in my school was very supportive of the work being done in my classroom and cleared other obstacles that could have created more problems.

While I received permission from my principal and district to use a literature-based program, I still had to observe the curriculum objectives for reading and language arts. I tried to incorporate the skills and strategies from our curriculum statements into Book Club. By looking at the expectations for outgoing fifth grade students, I could help prepare them for middle school. I tried to include the appropriate skills and strategies into the Book Club Program where ever and when ever they would fit.

Any program of alternative instruction raises concern among other teachers in the building and even in the district. Other teachers were invited to watch Book Club and to try it in their classrooms. One of my colleagues, a fourth grade teacher also used Book Club in her classroom. She and I presented an inservice/workshop to the staff members to provide a description of what was going on in our classes. Some objections other teachers raised centered around the diversity of the students involved, and the use of one novel to meet the needs of a whole class. I often told teachers that it was because of the good themes and ideas in the books that the children became so engaged with the story that they wanted to read more. I strongly believe this and that is why I put so much time into literature selection.

Many teachers in the building had had these children in previous grades and knew first hand the diversity involved. However, their experiences with these students had been with the students

reading stories focused on isolated skill development from a basal reader. Providing other teachers with the novels I was using, transcripts of book club discussions and, copies of reading logs, as well as inviting them into my classroom seemed to help. No major hurdles were presented as other staff finally realized that it wasn't a big secret what went on behind our doors. However, with the exception of the fourth grade teacher, no other teacher in the building tried Book Club in their classrooms during the two years of the study.

During the first year of the study I was out of the classroom numerous times during the year, and a substitute teacher was needed. I tried to get the same substitute for all my absences, because I felt he/she could get used to the children as well as the Book Club Program, but this was only partially accomplished. I found most of the substitute teachers in my classroom were from traditional reading backgrounds. While they felt comfortable teaching a basal lesson, they were not comfortable, nor familiar, with teaching Book Club. This created a major problem for me because I wanted the students to have real text experiences in my absences, yet I did not want the substitute teacher to misconstrue Book Club. I finally decided to leave alternative plans for reading during my absences. This created further problems, in that the Book Club Program was not always continuous, and occasionally we had Book Club only one or two days in a week.

This problem was further compounded after Christmas when, even though I was rarely absent, I had a student teacher in the classroom who was also from a very traditional reading background. This created a problem because he taught Book Club with a different perspective and philosophy from my own. I felt this gave the students a mixed message, and made it more difficult for me to resume teaching Book Club once he had finished student teaching.

Yet another constraint placed on the program was that of scheduling conflicts. Fifth graders in our school have the opportunity to receive violin instruction during the school day, from a middle school teacher who comes to our building twice a week. Her schedule was not flexible and the time she came to our building was immediately following Book Club. This meant that if the students were actively engaged in a conversation and wanted to continue in their Book Club

groups, they couldn't. We had to be finished within this time frame so they would be able to go to the violin class. My choices were to move Book Club to another time during the day, or work hard to ensure we were finished on time on violin class days. I chose the later of these options since changing to other times of the morning merely created different scheduling conflicts.

A final constraint was mentioned above, that of availability of literature. In our district, classroom sets of books are available from a centrally located language arts office. Books need to be requested several weeks ahead of time. However, if the teacher who used them previously hadn't finished with them on time, the books might not be available when they were needed. As was the case in the biography unit, the titles I had selected were not going to be available at all and alternative titles had to be selected. While we were fortunate to have classroom sets of books available, there was frustration involved in coordinating different books related to a central theme, and getting the books when needed.

Recommendations

Several recommendations have resulted from my study concerning these four issues. First, when forming the small student-led response groups it is important to remember that heterogeneity can be defined by many different variables. The inclusion of factors such as attitude, personality, and socialization skills should be considered along with those of ability, gender, and ethnicity. Groups should be reevaluated as often as necessary and should be flexible and changeable throughout the school year. Second, when considering the various options for literature selection look at your goals, your district's requirements and guidelines, and the availability of literature. Only after consideration of these issues can the decision of literature selection be made to create the most successful literacy experiences for you and your students. Third, students need a voice in their own learning, whether it be in choice of literature, literacy activities, or location of small groups. Finding a way to meet your students' voice should be considered and arrived at based on your classroom and the needs of your students. And finally, when working within a public school system be aware of the possible trouble spots that may occur so that you can be prepared to meet

them head on. Issues like curriculum, concerns and questions from colleagues, the presence of other school personnel in your classroom, scheduling conflicts, and availability of literature are some of the things you may want to prepare for.

Conclusion

I mentioned earlier, that I kept a journal during these two years to record observations, feelings, frustrations, and successes as two classes of fifth graders enjoyed Book Club. Using this journal of daily notes to monitor the program and make changes based upon them aided greatly in making this program a success and helping me to evaluate my students' progress. Being a good classroom teacher means monitoring your students, your teaching, and the amount of learning going on in your classroom. As these issues arose I dealt with them, and the program continued to evolve and grow beyond my expectations.

Implementing a program such as this has opened my eyes to offer some suggestions to classroom teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers. To classroom teachers - don't be afraid to try new programs that you believe in. Going against the grain can be very beneficial to you and more importantly, to your students. You are the best judge of your students, you alone know that it's their diversity that makes them unique and you are qualified to make instructional decisions that will provide them with successful literacy experiences. To teacher educators - continue to stress to those entering the field of teaching to try their new ideas, to bring their excitement and enthusiasm into the classroom. Allow them opportunities throughout their educational experience to be in real classrooms, so that they can come to appreciate and understand the youngsters in today's schools. And to educational researchers - continue to come into our classrooms, bringing great ideas with you, and valuing the ideas we have. By treating us as professionals and realizing that our students hold the keys to your research, you give us the latitude and motivation to continue striving to be the best classroom teachers we can be.

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Figure 1. Book Club Components

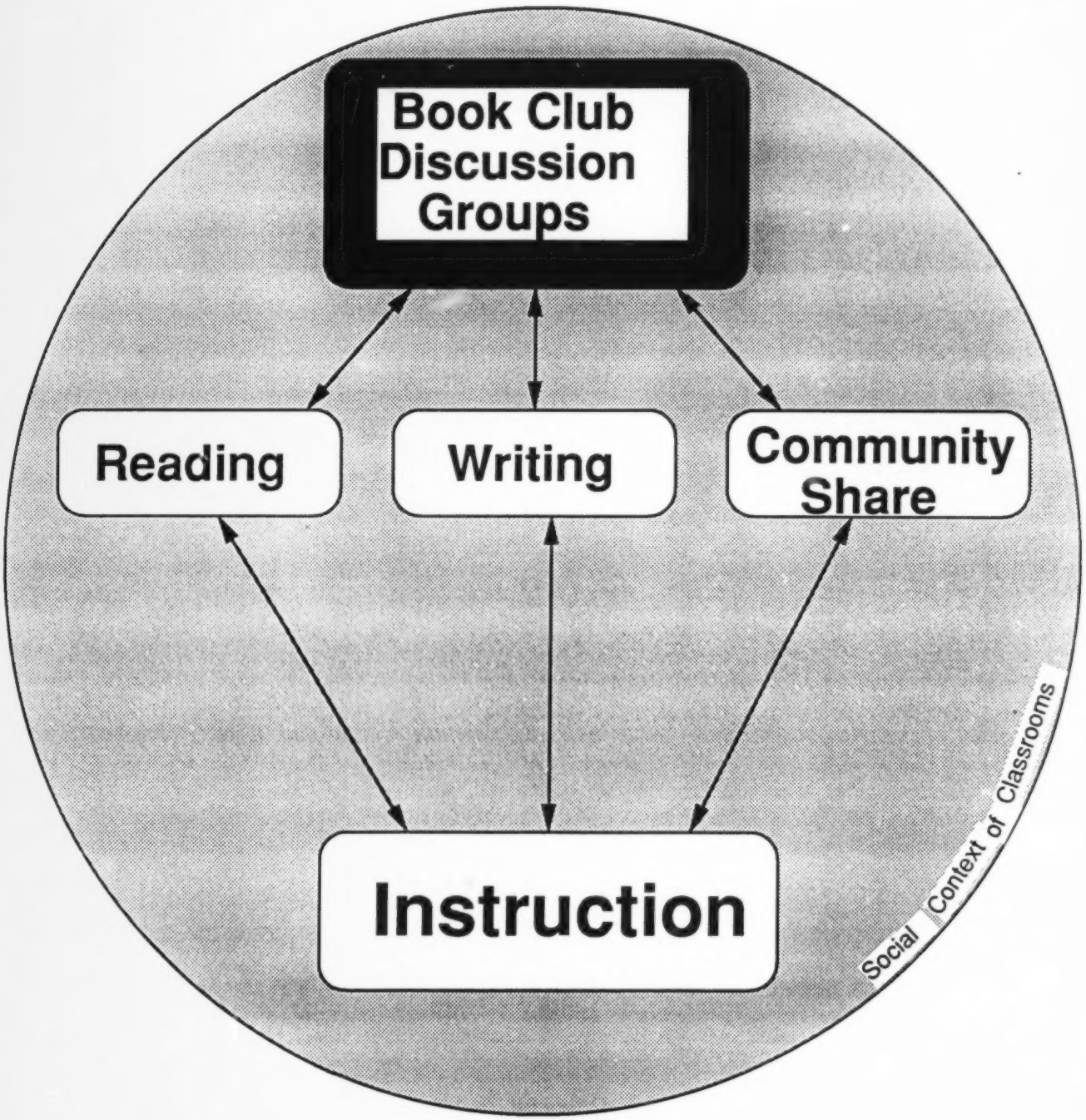
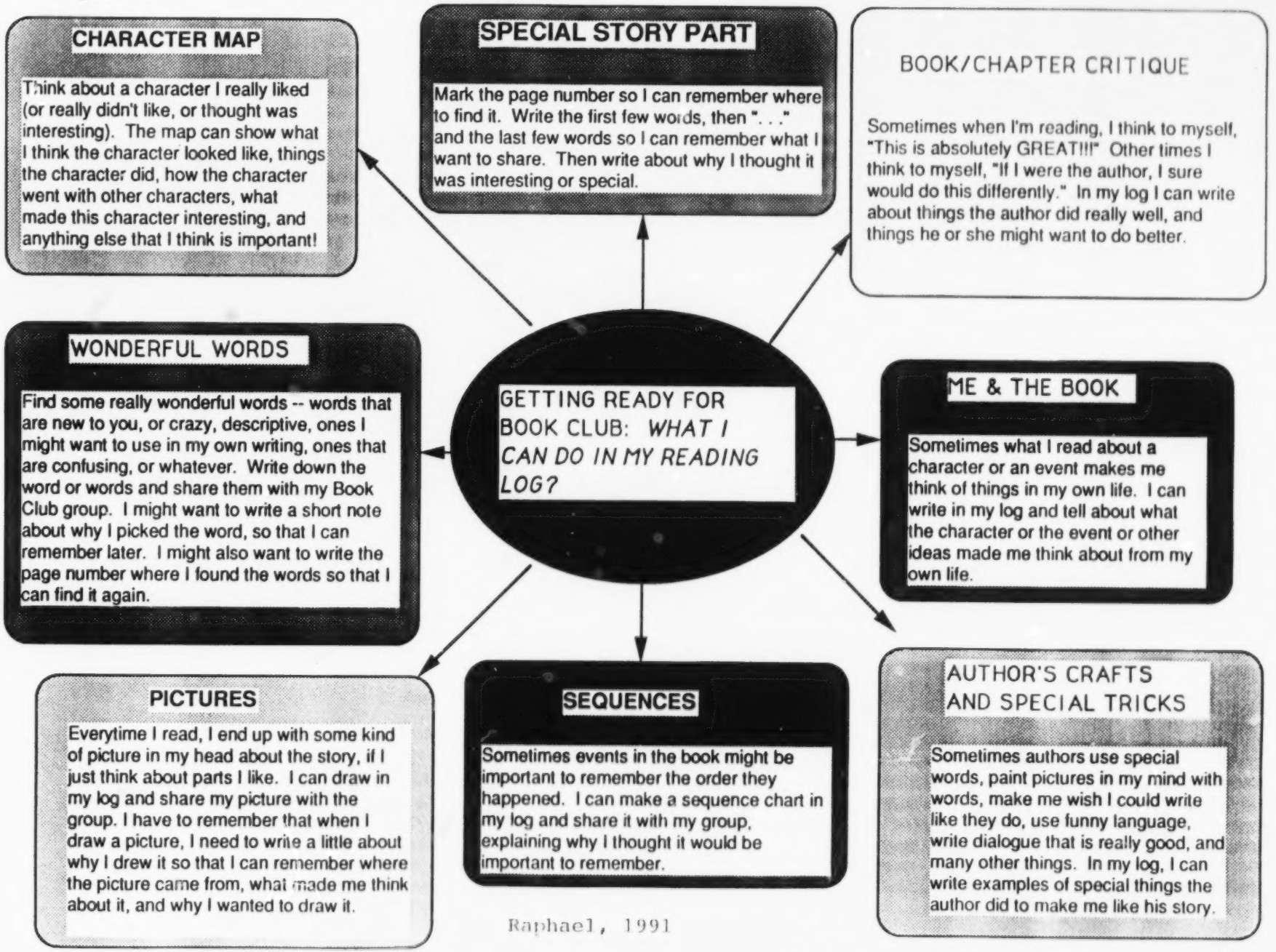


Figure 2.


CHARACTER MAP
Think about a character I really liked (or really didn't like, or thought was interesting). The map can show what I think the character looked like, things the character did, how the character went with other characters, what made this character interesting, and anything else that I think is important!
SPECIAL STORY PART
Mark the page number so I can remember where to find it. Write the first few words, then ". . ." and the last few words so I can remember what I want to share. Then write about why I thought it was interesting or special.
BOOK/CHAPTER CRITIQUE
Sometimes when I'm reading, I think to myself, "This is absolutely GREAT!!!" Other times I think to myself, "If I were the author, I sure would do this differently." In my log I can write about things the author did really well, and things he or she might want to do better.
WONDERFUL WORDS
Find some really wonderful words -- words that are new to you, or crazy, descriptive, ones I might want to use in my own writing, ones that are confusing, or whatever. Write down the word or words and share them with my Book Club group. I might want to write a short note about why I picked the word, so that I can remember later. I might also want to write the page number where I found the words so that I can find it again.
GETTING READY FOR BOOK CLUB: WHAT I CAN DO IN MY READING LOG?
ME & THE BOOK
Sometimes what I read about a character or an event makes me think of things in my own life. I can write in my log and tell about what the character or the event or other ideas made me think about from my own life.
PICTURES
Everytime I read, I end up with some kind of picture in my head about the story, if I just think about parts I like. I can draw in my log and share my picture with the group. I have to remember that when I draw a picture, I need to write a little about why I drew it so that I can remember where the picture came from, what made me think about it, and why I wanted to draw it.
SEQUENCES
Sometimes events in the book might be important to remember the order they happened. I can make a sequence chart in my log and share it with my group, explaining why I thought it would be important to remember.
AUTHOR'S CRAFTS AND SPECIAL TRICKS
Sometimes authors use special words, paint pictures in my mind with words, make me wish I could write like they do, use funny language, write dialogue that is really good, and many other things. In my log, I can write examples of special things the author did to make me like his story.

Raphael, 1991

Table 1. Class Generated List of Reading Log Choices

Spokes Developed by Teacher and Students: February 21

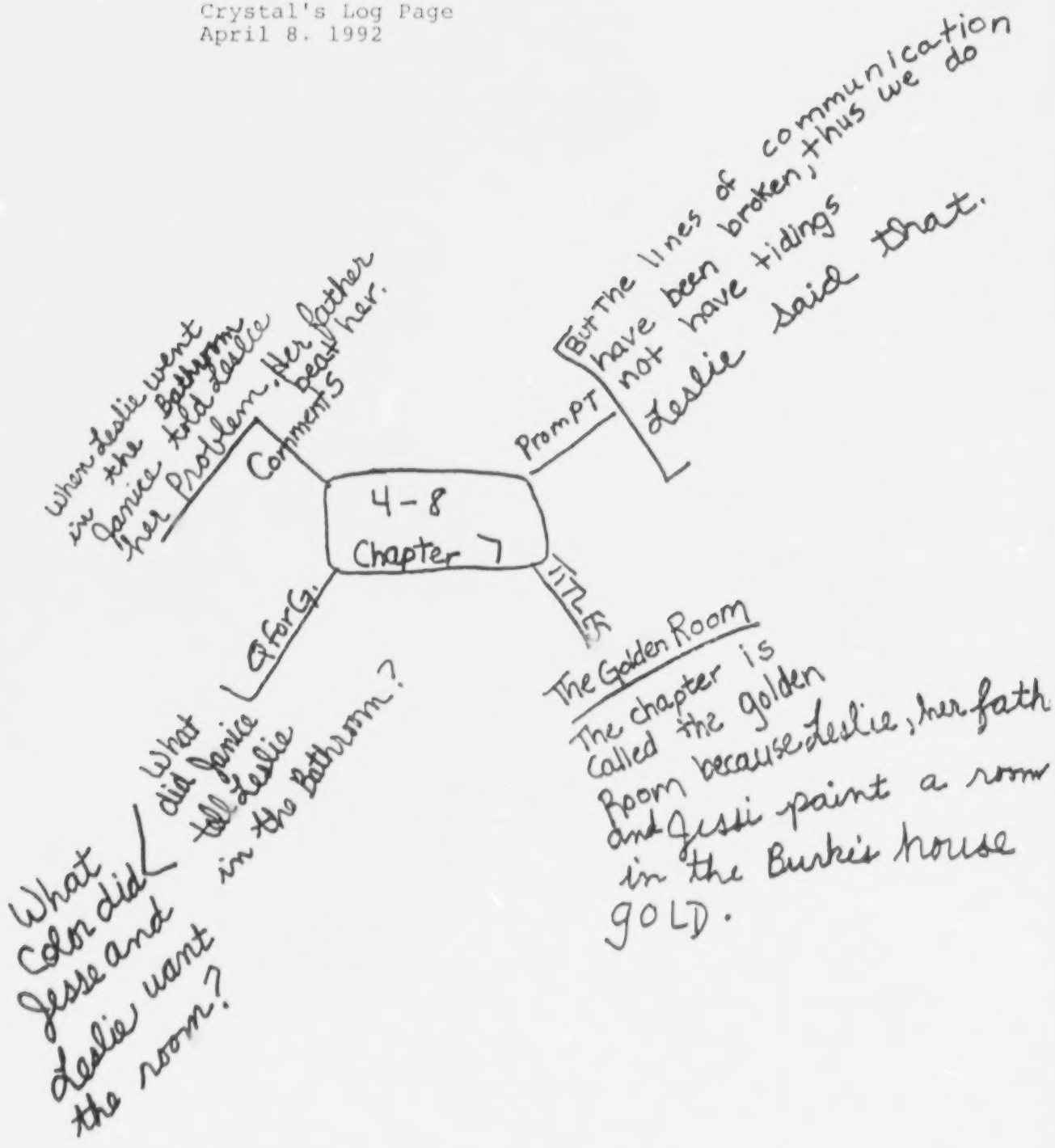
Intertextuality	Prompt
Characters	Summary
Wonderful Words	Prediction
Favorite Parts	Author Crafts
Special Story Parts	Comments
Picture	Critique
Author Questions	What I Didn't Like
Sequencing	Questions for Group
Compare/Contrast	Me and the Book
Vocabulary	

Subsequent Spokes Developed by Students

Titles: April 6	If I were in the story: June 1
Problem Solving: April 6	What if.....: June 1
Feelings: April 13	Explain: June 2
Condition (person): May 18	Friendship: June 3
Free Sentences: May 27	Life: June 3

If I could change something in the story.....: June 1

Figure 3.
Crystal's Log Page
April 8. 1992


4-8
Chapter 7
Comments
When Leslie went in the Bathroom Janice told Leslie her Problem. Her father beat her.
Prompt
But the lines of communication have been broken; thus we do not have tidings
Leslie said that.
Q For G.
What did Janice tell Leslie in the Bathroom?
What Color did Jesse and Leslie want the room?
Title
The Golden Room
The chapter is called the golden Room because Leslie, her father and Jessi paint a room in the Burke's house GOLD.